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SUBJECT: Sudan/Uganda/DRC: UN Humanitarian Chief Meets Head of Lord's Resistance Army

Ref: Khartoum 02666

1. (U) SUMMARY: Lord's Resistance Army LRA rebel chief Joseph Kony pressed for the withdrawal of Ugandan forces from Southern Sudan during a brief meeting with UN Under Secretary General (USYG) Jan Egeland on November 12 at the village of Nabanga on the Sudan-Congo border. Kony refused Egeland's request to release captive women, children, and sick people to Egeland's custody. Kony also told the press "there are no children" in the LRA. Though Egeland admitted that the mood of the meeting was "tense" and "somber," he judged it a success and urged greater international support for ongoing peace talks. The LRA delegation to the talks remained behind in Nabanga for further discussions with LRA leadership, as did mediators from the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and the UN. End Summary.

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LRA Leaders Want Security, UPDF Withdrawal  
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2. (U) In an estimated 15-20 minute meeting with Egeland near the village of Nabanga on the Sudan-Congo border November 12, LRA chief Joseph Kony focused almost exclusively on security questions, complaining that the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) are not respecting the recently-renewed Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA). Kony pressed for a complete UPDF withdrawal from Southern Sudan. Egeland, who departed Juba the following day for a meeting with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in Kampala, later appeared to endorse the request, stating that "ideally" the UPDF should withdraw to the Ugandan border.

3. (U) LRA second-in-command Vincent Otti, who had a much longer meeting with Egeland prior to Kony's arrival at the site, also complained that UPDF deployments had prevented the LRA from gathering at the designated assembly areas of Owiny-Kibul (east of the Nile on the Sudan-Uganda border) and Ri-Kwangba (west of the Nile near the Sudanese village of Nabanga, and the site of the meeting with Egeland).

4. (SBU) Egeland described Kony as calm, coherent, and clearly in control. Only Kony and Otti spoke to the visitors. Kony listened to questions in English without translation and replied in Acholi. Arrangements for the meeting were "extraordinarily tense," Egeland said, and the LRA leaders were "the most paranoid I have ever seen" about their own security. GoSS Vice President Riek Machar, chief mediator in the peace talks, accompanied Egeland to the meeting and acquiesced in an LRA demand that all armed elements - including Egeland's personal protection detail -- maintain a distance of 100 meters from the discussion site. Egeland's security detail also relinquished their weapons during the meeting, and participants were required to remove body armor.

5. (U) Near the end of the meeting with Kony, Otti asked Egeland to help persuade the International Criminal Court (ICC) to lift the indictments against Kony, Otti, and two other LRA commanders. Egeland said he told the LRA leaders that the ICC is an independent body over which he has no direct influence. He urged the LRA to remain committed to the peace talks and to comply with current

agreements, which would improve the LRA's international image.

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Complaints About Food, Water  
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¶16. (U) Otti complained that food provided by the GoSS at the Ri-Kwangba assembly point was rotting, and UN officials confirmed separately that there is no adequate water supply at the site. Egeland outlined detailed plans to provide humanitarian assistance at the site. The Catholic relief organization Caritas, through its Uganda office, has received funding to supply humanitarian assistance at Ri-Kwangba, Egeland explained. In his separate briefing of diplomats, Egeland admitted that there is not significant LRA presence at either of the designated assembly points "per se," but said LRA units are in the vicinity of both locations.

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UNMIS Will Assist, MONUC Won't  
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¶17. (SBU) Egeland and a delegation of 60 persons flew to the meeting site in three UNMIS helicopters. Egeland subsequently announced that "UNMIS has agreed to provide logistical support" to the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team (CHMT) set up under the COHA. UNMIS officials in Juba had earlier balked at providing such assistance, citing directives from UN headquarters in New York. Asked whether MONUC could help monitor LRA activities in DRC, or prevent the dispersal of LRA units away from Garamba National Park (where Kony and Otti are believed to be based), Egeland said MONUC officials have told him they "have nothing close to this capacity." There had once been an effort by the United States and others to persuade MONUC and UNMIS to assist in apprehending LRA leadership,

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Egeland said, but "this is no longer the focus." The LRA still pose a military threat, Egeland emphasized. He estimated total LRA strength, "including captives," at 5000 people. The LRA remain "incredibly effective as a terror producer and as an armed militia." He had consulted with colleagues in MONUC, Egeland said, who were "impressed with how mobile and how well armed the LRA is." LRA units are "scattered," Egeland said, but retain "central command structure" and "take orders."

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No Release of Captives  
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¶18. (U) Prior to his face-to-face meeting with LRA leadership, Egeland had pressed for the release of an unspecified number of women, children, and sick people. In what Egeland admitted were "sometimes heated" telephone conversations ahead of the meeting, Otti had already made it clear that no captives were likely to be released. Kony confirmed this during his discussion with Egeland, and later told the press there are "no children" in the LRA. However, Egeland noted, one LRA combatant is currently receiving medical attention in Juba with the approval of the GoSS, and such initiatives might continue. Egeland also raised the issue of 15 girls from the Nabanga area who were abducted by the LRA in February and March 2006. He said the LRA leadership had no direct response concerning these girls. Egeland said the LRA leaders agreed to continue the dialogue about the potential release of captives and provide a final answer to his request in about a month.

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Accentuating the Positive, Seeking Support  
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¶19. (SBU) Egeland accentuated positive aspects of the current peace process in his meeting with the LRA, private briefings in Juba, and remarks to the press. He also warned of the potential "catastrophe" should talks break down. Hundreds of thousands of IDPs in northern Uganda have returned to their homes since the talks began, Egeland said, and there have been "no major attacks" since last August. "Everyone I talk to" says the LRA are not responsible for recent

violence east and south of Juba, Egeland said. There were doubts about the peace initiative when it began, but this genuinely "African-led" process has drawn wide international support. He urged donors to deliver quickly on their pledges, and provide additional assistance.

¶10. (U) Egeland said there were \$4.7 million in pledges so far for the Juba Initiative Fund, both to support the current peace talks and fund related initiatives. The "talks would have broken down" had donors not intervened to pay three months of accumulated hotel bills, Egeland claimed. The Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Canada have all made pledges, Egeland said, and Ireland, France, and Italy have signaled the intent to contribute. A European Commission representative at Egeland's briefing said her organization was also likely to provide assistance.

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Mediators, LRA Delegation Remain Behind  
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¶11. (U) Most of the LRA delegation to the current peace talks traveled to Nabanga with Egeland, but remained behind after he left. They and a small group of GoSS and UN mediators want to consult further with LRA leadership and develop a clearer LRA response to current proposals for a protocol addressing "root causes" of the LRA conflict. Egeland and others in the November 12 meeting with Kony and Otthi noted that neither leader raised any of the issues that have preoccupied the talks for weeks, including federalism, reparations, and the creation of a new government ministry for northern Uganda. The remainder of the group that traveled to Nabanga is due to return to Juba on November 15. Several international journalists also remained in Nabanga seeking further opportunities to interview Kony and report on LRA activities.

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